

2012 UNVEILED

An Interview with John Major Jenkins

BY CARRIE GROSSMAN





John Major Jenkins is an independent researcher and author who has devoted his life to reconstructing ancient Mayan cosmology and philosophy. Since he began his odyssey of research and discovery of the Maya in 1986, Jenkins has written dozens of articles and many books, including *Journey to the Mayan Underworld* and *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*. His research draws on astronomy, folklore, iconography, mythology, religion, calendrics, and science, making him an authority on the widely explored question of 2012. Jenkins was the first to elucidate the connection between the astronomical features involved in the rare galactic alignment of 2012 and Maya creation mythology. His careful scholarship and cutting-edge insights into why the Maya chose 2012 to end a World Age cycle have been endorsed by some of the most progressive thinkers of our day.

Common Ground: What drew you to work with the Mayan people and to study their cosmology?

John Major Jenkins: My search for meaning and to serve a larger purpose. I was 21 years old and became intrigued with the possibility of visiting the Maya in Guatemala and studying the archaeological sites. In 1986, I saved up some money and went.

Since then you've spent a lot of time in Izapa, Mexico, where carved monuments of the Maya depict important astronomical data, which you've researched and analyzed. This data suggests that a rare astronomical configuration will occur on December 21, 2012, when the center of the Milky Way galaxy lines up with the winter solstice sun. What is the significance of this galactic alignment?

Well, it seems to be the reason why the Maya fixed the end of their 13-baktun cycle to December 21, 2012. The Maya were much more scientifically advanced than we usually give them credit for and could calculate the precession of the equinoxes. As I've reconstructed it, their creation mythology, nicely depicted on the carved monuments at Izapa, describes what they thought about the galactic alignment and 2012. It would bode a time of transformation and renewal. The spiritual teachings allow for the free-will choice of human beings to awaken to higher truth by sacrificing attachments to limiting illusions.

Supposedly this galactic configuration only happens once every 26,000 years! I've heard you say that while we don't know exactly what happened 26,000 years ago, we do know that the end of the last Ice Age occurred approximately 13,000 years ago—halfway through the cycle. Does this suggest that a similar planetary event is on the way?

This galactic configuration is not “supposed”; the rarity of the alignment is a fact of astronomy. There's no “maybe” about this in astronomy. What we need to separate out is our projection of ideas onto the astronomy. It's also not a “planetary alignment”—it is the precessional shifting of the December solstice sun into alignment with the Milky Way's midline, or galactic equator, in Sagittarius. There is evidence that the ancient Maya were aware of this future alignment and in fact anchored the end of their 13-baktun cycle to it. This is the well-documented, hard-science of my reconstruction work, which is convincing to those who can study the evidence in an unbiased way. Unfortunately, my work is highly politicized within academia because I don't have an ivory-tower degree and have pursued my work independently. Some Maya scholars are actively engaged in mitigating my work through defamatory tactics in peer-reviewed journals, while other Maya scholars echo my pioneering ideas. It's a pretty amazing process to observe. Apparently,



a few professional Maya scholars are willing to become ethically compromised in order to protect their guild.

That's very unfortunate but not entirely surprising.

Yes, I'm painfully aware of how much 2012 disinformation is out there, and it comes not only from the pop marketplace but also professional Maya scholars.

There seem to be a lot of competing views. While many people emphasize the specific date—December 21, 2012—some say the alignment will actually happen over a period of several years and not just on one specific day. Do you agree?

I not only agree but also first proposed the 36-year alignment window (AD 1980 to 2016) based on the calculation of European astronomer Jean Meeus. In fact, I suggested that it was important to acknowledge a range for the alignment in my 1995 book, *The Center of Mayan Time*, because precession is such a slow process. This is not to say that “the shift” or “the events” or “the prophecies” are therefore slated to happen within this 36-year alignment zone. It's just a way to realistically think about the galactic alignment in astronomy, while we determine how the ancient Maya grappled with calculating it. What, for example, is an allowable error range for their calculation? Ten years? Twenty-five years? Fifty years? They were making a 2100-year forward calculation in the precessional shifting process. Because we insist on filtering Maya ideas through our modern Western concepts, much misconception has arisen about 2012.

That's interesting. How was the Mayan Long Count Calendar with the 13-baktun cycle rediscovered and interpreted in modern times?

The Long Count Calendar was reconstructed by intrepid investigators and really got underway in the 1880s with the German librarian Ernst Förstemann. By a slow process, which I recounted in my recent book, *The 2012 Story*, the Long Count was pieced together and revived. For the sake of clarity, the process culminated with my 1998 study, *Maya Cosmogony 2012*, which unlike most other 2012 books, before or since, attempted to reconstruct what the ancient Maya thought about 2012. It was the culmination of over ten years of research and identified the reason why the early Maya designed the Long Count with the 2012 cycle's ending date intentionally placed on the winter solstice. My apologies for being

straightforward on this point. At this stage, some thirteen years after that book was published, there have been many come-latelies on the topic, and the Googlesphere has allowed for a lot of plagiarizing.

Yes—and likely a lot of misinterpretation. Many people refer to 2012 as the end of the world. How do you feel about this? Could it be a metaphor for something that is taking place in the collective consciousness?

I think the idea of the end of the world is a mistaken notion promulgated by under-informed and exploitative doomsday pimps, usually emanating from a money-hungry Hollywood or an ethically compromised marketplace. At best, it's a simplistic bumper sticker, which doesn't at all represent the profundity of ancient Maya cosmology and the teachings associated with 2012.

It seems that the Maya didn't actually refer to the end of the world at all but rather to the end of a World Age.

Yes, the end of a World Age is very different than the end of the world. Here we have the distinction between cyclic time and linear time. In the cyclic time philosophy employed by the Maya—and many other indigenous peoples as well as most Asian philosophies—a cycle ending (or World Age ending) is about transformation and renewal. This doesn't automatically happen in some predetermined sense. It depends on our ability to consciously engage the process of transformation and renewal by sacrificing our attachment to the illusions that feed ignorance and self-serving egoism. Fixating the consciousness to the dictates of the selfish ego keeps the mind and heart from seeing the big picture—and stupid decisions follow.

In general, it seems that transformation is a process, like the blooming of a flower; it doesn't happen in an instant. Inner transformation often unfolds the same way, even if it's catalyzed by a specific event. Perhaps this is relevant when contemplating 2012?

Yes, this is a good way to think about transformation and renewal. It takes an act of sacrifice to catalyze a turnabout in one's psychology and spiritual orientation. In spiritual traditions, this is called a *metanoia*, a turnabout in the deepest seat of consciousness. The necessary sacrifice is the sacrifice of our attachment to illusions that support limited and unfulfilling states of being. In my effort to elucidate the spiritual teachings connected to 2012, I read

these simple yet profound teachings within the Maya creation mythology depicted at Izapa.

It seems that similar teachings exist in other cultures as well—for instance, the Hopi prophecies or the Vedic scriptures, which speak about the different yugas. Is there a connection?

In my 2002 book, *Galactic Alignment*, I explored the similarities between what I had just decoded within Maya cosmology and global ideas of spiritual awakening and astronomical cycles. The connection exists because all of these traditional cultures and doctrines were tapped into what is identified as the perennial philosophy. The modern world of scientific materialism is a nihilistic countertradition that denies transcendent wisdom, a higher truth beyond the measurable surface of reality. In spiritual, or perhaps psychological terms, this is a denial of anything beyond the individual ego.

The 2012 phenomenon has become a fertile field to capitalize on for scholars, New Age enthusiasts, doomsayers, popular culture, etc., but this isn't anything new. Human beings have been drawn to these kinds of phenomena for centuries. One recent example is Y2K. What differentiates the 2012 phenomenon from other prophetic scenarios?

In the pop marketplace of trendy exploitation, nothing differentiates 2012 from Y2K. Likewise, to the superficially minded, nothing differentiates sex from love. Because the majority of humanity is stuck to the surface of reality and refuses to go deep into a process of self-transformation—and is equally unwilling to put down the iPads to look deeply at the profound truths underlying 2012—2012 will come and go, just as other misunderstood topics have. For example, 2012 is not really a prophetic scenario; *it's a rare astronomical alignment wrapped hand-in-glove with a perennial spiritual teaching for transformation and renewal.*

Do prophecies serve us or simply engender fear and misperception?

Prophecies can serve those who wish to sow fear and misconceptions. In the 2012 arena, I could name names. It's quite unfortunate. Luckily, 2012 is not about a prophecy—which carries the connotation of something definitely slated to happen. A variant of this has been leveraged by several popular 2012 writers, in which “bad things will happen if you don't follow my system.” And the proposed system is an idiosyncratic hodgepodge of pseudo-Maya ideas. One of these passed on October 28.

Maybe now we can stop being distracted by flashy pseudo-systems and look at what the ancient Maya were actually saying.

Do you think we're drawn to doomsday scenarios as a culture?

I don't believe we are. I think the marketplace wants us to be, and it largely offers us only that. Why does everyone want to consume such nonsense? It's pretty much the only thing on the menu, which doesn't mean people want it. For over a decade, I've had many experiences of being interviewed about 2012 in mainstream documentaries and TV news programs. Although I deliver the goods, the truth, in concise and compelling ways, it gets twisted, dumbed down, or edited out. There has been a preordained doomsday agenda with these places. Does everyone want to read at a third-grade reading level? I don't think so, but that's what publishers advise an author to strive for. We get downgraded into the lowest common denominator. We should Occupy Hollywood about this, because like the bankers on Wall Street, the media tries in myriad ways to keep us from achieving any kind of self-empowering knowledge about our full potential as human beings. The 1% need unconscious fools to sustain their wealth.

That's very true.

Empowered populaces are dangerous to the power structure. These considerations are not outside the scope of what 2012 is about, and I explore these things in detail in my recent book, *The 2012 Story*. It has to do with reading the deep archetypal meaning of the Maya creation myth, which I first offered thirteen years ago in my book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012*. I launched the transformation-and-renewal meme years before that, and it does seem that it has now firmly taken root. That's one basic thing that I'm glad to see getting through. There are all kinds of derivations—"birth 2012," "awaken 2012," "transformation 2012," and so on.

Well, that's heartening. Regardless of what actually happens on or around December 21, 2012, it does seem clear that this is an auspicious time. People talk about a portal or a transformation of consciousness—what do you think that looks like?

The idea of a portal associated with 2012 actually comes from my identification of an astronomical feature called "the dark rift in the Milky Way" as the intended "goal" of the sun's alignment with the Milky Way in 2012. This is an astronomical feature, which appears as a dark ridge or a rift running along the Milky Way.



It is a feature identified in the Maya creation myth as the *Xibalba be*—the road or portal into the Underworld. In the years I spent decoding Maya folklore and concepts, I was able to show that this astronomical feature is associated with a complex of "birthing" concepts. Basically, it was mythologized as a celestial doorway, a birthing canal, or a portal. In concert with this reconstruction work, I showed how the nuclear bulge of the Galactic Center was conceived as the womb of a cosmic mother deity, an idea subsequently picked up by other writers.

Since you speak all over the world, how would you distinguish different peoples' anticipation of 2012?

I've noted in my travels that U.S. citizens, even more so than Canadians or Mexicans, are extremely susceptible to stupid ideas—probably because they have been so brainwashed by a vapid and biased news media. With the Hollywood component factored in, Southern California events are practically unbearable, while Midwest and East Coast venues typically involve more engaged, level-headed, open-minded people with a no-nonsense sensibility. I've been very heartened by recent events I've spoken at in England, Toronto, Arkansas, and Connecticut. In general, those who treat 2012 and life superficially will have a superficial and largely inaccurate experience of what it is about. Those who can go deeper and pay attention to what's real, sorting out fantabulous

nonsense from the real McCoy, will have the best experience because they will see the *dang an sich*, the *thing in itself*.

How do you feel that this time of great change is affecting—or will affect—you personally?

It's already affected me greatly. I am challenged to let go of, to sacrifice, all attachment to the twenty-five years I've spent pursuing truth and knowledge. I'm pretty much done. What more can I do? It's out of my hands. Since my efforts came to focus around the 2012 discussion and I've been paying attention for longer than most, I bear witness to an irrational superstorm of exploitation and misrepresentation. But I do take heart in the small number of people who do understand what it's really about, who take the time to study the material out of love and respect for the Maya and who courageously engage the process of self-transformation.

How can we best ride this mysterious wave and use it to our benefit in everyday life?

My advice to people for 2012 is my same advice for life in general: be open in love or closed in fear; you choose. Your experience will thereby be determined. ♣

To learn more about John Major Jenkins' work, please visit Alignment2012.com, JohnMajorJenkins.com, and The2012Story.com.